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ABSTRACT

Only 26.4% of the 100 millon people living in Pakistan are literate. There are sharp differences between urban and rural literacy rates, literacy rates in the four provinces of Pakistan, and the literacy rates for men and women (with females constituting the largest group of illiterates in the country). Politically there has been a great deal of articulation of the need for educating the masses. However, this has remained a superficial concern. Governmental funding, alone, will not suffice to bring about an appreciable rise in Pakistan's literacy rate. Literacy efforts in the future have to have a social rather than a bureaucratic base in order to succeed. A project which has met with a great deal of success in Pakistan is the Adult Basic Education Society of Gujranwala, established in 1948. The low drop-out rate of this project's students is a result of sensitive planning, monitoring, and administration of literacy programs. (RS)

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NATIONAL DETERMINANTS OF LITERACY: REPORT ON PAKISTAN

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Overview:

Pakistan is an Islamic state which was created in 1947. It has a population of a 100 million people. Only 26.4% of the population is literate. A simple criteria has been established by the Literacy and Mass Education Commission for confirming literacy in a person. According to this criteria, in order to be considered literate, a person should be able to read and write in any regional language of the country and to be able to do simple calculations with numbers. Despite this, very few people in the country have been able to acquire literacy since independence.

The official figures for literacy indicate that during the period 1951-81 the literacy rate in the country has increased from 16.4% to 26.2%. There are sharp differences between rural and urban literacy rates. The ratio swings from 55.3% for urban males to 7.3% for rural females showing a seven and a half fold difference. There are differences amongst the literacy rates amongst the four provinces of Pakistan,namely Sind, Panjab, N.W.F.P, and Baluchistan. Sind has the highest literacy ratio (31.5%) followed by the Panjab (27.4%),the N.W.F.P.(16.7%) and Baluchistan (10.3%). Islamabad, the federal capital is the only

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area where the majority of the population is literate.

About 13 million people in Pakistan have some level of education, 46% have acquired primary education, 23% have been through middle school and 20% have passed the school-leaving certificate examination. About 5.9% have passed the Intermediate examination, 3.8% the B.A./B.Sc., and only 1% have passed the M.A./M.Sc. post-graduate degree courses. The percentage of engineering, medical and law graduates is 0.28, 0.25, and 0.25 respectively.

Females constitute the largest group of illiterates in the country. According to the 1981 Census the literacy rate amongst females in the country was only 16% and that of rural females as low as 7.3%. There are areas in Pakistan where the female literacy is nominal. In rural Baluchistan for instance it is 1.8%. Findings of workshops on female literacy indicate that women generally carry a low self-image and therefore have low aspirations. The national media does little to enhance the self-concept of women in the country. Sociocultural constraints have to be systematically removed in order to create a climate for female literacy.

Primary education has been one of the major factors influencing literacy. According to one survey, a little more than 50% of the

children of school-going age are enrolled in primary schools in Pakistan. About 50% of these will drop out of school before acquiring any worthwhile skills. The percentage of enrollment is lower and the drop-out rate is higher in rural areas, particularly in the case of females. Thus a great number of children who do not get access to basic education or drop-out before acquiring literacy, join the the 45 million adult illiterates in the country, every year.

Pakistan, unfortunately has a very high birth rate. Two to three million children are born every year in the country. Unless some provision is made to absorb them into the formal school system they will continue to join the ranks of illiterates in the country.

Political Commitment and Bureaucratic Structuring and Implementation of Programmes:

Politically there has been a great deal of articulation for the need for education for the masses. However, the need for imparting education to the masses has remained superficial. It has failed to realize that real change can only be brought about by a re-structuring of the social order. Such a change would involve a drastic change in national priorities along with a rise in the G.N.P. allocations for education.

Bureaucratic structuring and implementation of educational programmes in Pakistan has been haphazard and unimaginative. An analysis of the slow progress made in literacy points at ineffective monitoring and lack of motivation on part of the administrators, teachers and students. If literacy efforts and plans had been closely monitored at all stages of implementation it would have been possible to identify and correct weaknesses in the programmes.

Public motivation to acquire literacy cannot be greater than the importance, the sponsors themselves, attach to the literacy projects in terms of commitment. Governmental funding,alone,will not suffice to bring about an appreciable rise in the literacy rate in the country. Literacy efforts in Pakistan in the future have to have a social rather than a bureaucratic base in order to succeed.

The ABES Project of Gujranwala:

A project which has met with a great deal of success in Pakistan is the Adult Basic Education Society of Gujranwala which was established in 1948. A.B.E.S. is a private non-profit organization supported through private donations, community support, foreign aid-giving agencies and sale of books the society produces. The programmes organized by the society have a

low drop-out(about 19%). The programme is an approach to adult functional literacy and it is open to all adult members of the community. The literacy programme is preceded by a survey to access the needs of the community. Teachers are volunteers from within the community who are trained by the society. Honorarium is paid promptly to teachers. Since teachers are chosen from within the community absenteeism is minimized. Texts for the the literacy programme are carefully chosen for each project. The centres are closely supervised. The duration of the programme is for a period of six months after which the programme is formally closed and a box of library books is placed at the learning centre for the newly literate.

The low drop-out in the A.B.E.S. projects is a result of sensitive planning, monitoring and administration of literacy programmes. The objectives of the literacy project are set in advance and are evaluated against the results.

The A.B.E.S. has evolved a literacy approach which needs to be emulated by other agencies involved in efforts to impart literacy. The years spent in experimenting with literacy advancement in Pakistan should help us to plan anew for the years to come. Time is running out for us as a nation. We must commit our selves now to the promotion of education and literacy in the next decade.